



**CALIFORNIA
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
AUTHORITY**

BRIEFING: MAY 2010 EXECUTIVE/ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
AGENDA ITEM #7

TO: Chairman Pringle and Authority Board Members

FROM: Jeffrey M. Barker, Deputy Director

DATE: 5/05/10

RE: Kingdom of Belgium Memorandum of Understanding

Introduction

By way of a request made by Mr. Geert Criel, Consul General of Belgium, based in Los Angeles, the Authority has been asked to enter into a cooperative agreement (memorandum of understanding) with the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, of the Kingdom of Belgium. The draft agreement is similar to those entered into with other countries that employ high-speed train technology, and the draft agreement has been reviewed by the Authority's legal counsel.

The Authority's Existing MOUs

The Authority currently has entered into MOUs with seven (7) different countries: China (2009), France (2008), Germany (2009), Italy (2009), Japan (2005), Spain (2003), and the Republic of Korea (2010). The MOUs are all focused on cooperative information sharing, and do not incur any cost to the Authority. In recent months, several of the Authority's MOU partners have made presentations to the Board regarding their systems and experience.

Belgium's High-Speed Rail System

Belgium is home to a number of international high-speed train lines that connect its largest city, Brussels, to Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Britain. Some of the lines are

capable of speeds of 300 km/hr (186 mph) and other sections are capable of supporting 260 km/hr (162 mph).

Within the country are approximately 200 miles of high-speed rail lines, which are a combination of dedicated high-speed rail tracks and those called “modernized” tracks.

Thalys (a joint service offered by the Belgian, French, Dutch and German railways), Eurostar, TGV, and ICE trains all currently operate on Belgium’s rail lines.

NMBS/SNCB is the national railway company of Belgium.

The decision to build a high-speed rail link between Paris, Bruxelles, Amsterdam and Cologne was made in 1987, and in 1997 the first high-speed link between Paris and Brussels was opened, reducing the rail travel time between the two cities by more than 25 percent. In just seven years of operation (in 2004), the Thalys service transported its 40th million passenger – notable in that the population of Belgium today is 10.7 million people.

Belgium high-speed train entities are members of the UIC (International Union of Railways).

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Authority enter into this cooperative agreement with the Kingdom of Belgium as there are great opportunities to learn from Belgium’s high-speed train experience.

Attachments:

- ✓ Draft Cooperation Agreement